



Forest Heights Police Department Policy and Procedures Manual

Subject:	Department Vehicles			
General Order No.	2016-1	Effective Date:	January 1, 2016	
Chapter: 16	Section: 1	Number of Pages:	4	Replaces: GO 2000-22, 2000-39, 2000-72
Original Issue: 01/01/16		Dates Revised:		

A. Purpose

To establish policy regarding the use, operation, care and maintenance of Forest Heights Police Department (FHPD) vehicles.

B. Policy

This policy applies to vehicle operation by both FHPD officers and civilian employees unless a particular subsection specifies otherwise. All FHPD employees are responsible for knowing and understanding all aspects of the FHPD vehicle policy.

C. Identification

1. Every FHPD vehicle will be assigned a FHPD vehicle number.
2. Marked and unmarked vehicles will display the registration plates, at all times, issued by the Motor Vehicle Administration for the vehicle and in the places designated by the vehicle manufacturer

D. Use of FHPD Vehicles

1. Vehicles will be assigned to officers according to availability on an equitable basis by the FHPD Chief.
2. Off-duty vehicle use will not adversely impact the ability of the Department to perform its designated functions.
3. While off-duty, an officer will only operate a FHPD vehicle within 25 miles of his home or work location.
4. Off-duty pursuits or traffic stops for traffic violations will not be made outside of an officer's jurisdiction.
5. Off-duty travel will be permitted for officers and members of their immediate family; other passengers may be permitted with the approval of the officer's supervisor.
6. Authorized Passengers
 - a. Police officers from duly constituted police departments.
 - b. Prisoners.
 - c. Stranded motorists for ½ mile outside Forest Heights Town limit.
 - d. Town employees and elected Forest heights Town officials.
 - e. Persons who have specific authorization from the FHPD Chief.
 - f. Persons approved under off-duty use of vehicles.
7. Passenger Restraint Devices
 - a. When operating or riding in a FHPD vehicle, or when operating or riding in a non-FHPD vehicle in official capacity, all sworn and civilian employees will use seatbelts.
 - b. When transporting passengers, the officer will ensure that the passengers use seatbelts or are secured in appropriate child safety or booster seats, as appropriate and in accordance with applicable statute.

Chapter 16 Section 1

8. Non-Official Passengers

- a. Officers operating FHPD vehicles will not respond Code 3 to an incident when the vehicle is occupied by a passenger who is not a FHPD employee unless:
 - (1) the passenger is officially authorized to be in the vehicle as part of a ride-along;
 - (2) the officer is required to respond immediately to preserve life or property; or
 - (3) the response is being made to preserve the life of the passenger.
- b. Passengers who are not law enforcement officers will be dropped off at a safe location before the officer responds Code 3.

9. Radio Use

Officers operating a FHPD vehicle off-duty will monitor the primary operating frequencies of the FHPD.

10. Handling Incidents While Off-Duty

- a. Officers will be prepared to respond to any incident requiring police assistance occurring in the vicinity of their route of travel.
- b. If immediate action is necessary, the off-duty officer will take necessary action and notify the Prince George's County Police Department (PGCoPD) communications dispatcher.
- b. Officers may be placed on-duty if necessary.
- c. For routine cases encountered while off-duty, officers may call for a FHPD, PGCoPD or MSP unit to handle the situation; the off-duty unit will stand by and assist until that unit arrives.
- d. Off-duty officers may check on the welfare of an officer conducting a traffic stop.

11. Attire and Equipment

- a. Officers should be appropriately attired to effectively perform a police function while at the same time presenting a favorable image; exceptions will be granted to those officers on special assignment or assigned to a covert investigative position.
- b. Officers are responsible for the appearance and conduct of all passengers. A minimum standard of acceptable dress for a passenger would consist of a neat, clean shirt and trousers.
- c. When officers are off-duty and are either the operator or passenger in a FHPD vehicle, they will carry a FHPD issued or approved firearm on their person.

12. Personal Use

- a. FHPD vehicles will not be used for carrying heavy or excessive loads and will not have objects protruding from the trunk or windows.
- b. FHPD-owned trucks will not be used to haul personal items without the express written permission of the Chief.

13. Off-Duty Secondary Employment

- a. FHPD vehicles may be used for commuting to and from approved secondary employment locations.
- b. Vehicles will not be used in conjunction with secondary employment activity.
- c. Vehicles must be parked in an unobtrusive and secure position.

14. Suspension or Revocation of Off-Duty Use

- a. Off-duty vehicle use is a privilege and is subject to suspension or revocation for abuse.
- b. Involvement in preventable collisions while operating a FHPD vehicle on or off-duty is grounds for suspension of the officer's off-duty use privilege.

Chapter 16 Section 1

- c. An officer's off-duty use privilege is subject to suspension or revocation if the Chief deems it in the best interest of the FHPD.
- d. Suspension or revocation of these privileges as a result of involvement in a preventable collision will be included in the endorsements that accompany formal disciplinary proceedings and recommendations.
- e. In no instance will revocation or suspension have any bearing on formal proceedings and recommendations that are recorded on a record of disciplinary action.

E. Restrictions

- 1. No sworn or civilian employee will operate a FHPD vehicle unless the employee possesses a valid driver's license of the proper class for the type of vehicle being operated.
- 2. Civilian FHPD employees will not operate a FHPD patrol vehicle.
- 3. Only those persons specifically authorized by the Chief or a supervisor to operate FHPD vehicles may do so, except when FHPD vehicles are being road tested in connection with repair services.
- 4. Approval of the Chief is required if a FHPD vehicle will be used:
 - a. off-duty, beyond the mileage limit specified in this policy; or
 - b. out-of-state.
- 5. Approval of the Chief or Forest Heights Town Mayor is required if a FHPD vehicle will be operated out of state for more than 24 consecutive hours.
- 6. Alcohol – Officers and civilian employees will not operate a FHPD vehicle with any measurable amount of alcohol and/or controlled dangerous substance present in their body.
- 7. Officers will not purchase alcoholic beverages while in a FHPD vehicle.
- 8. The use of FHPD vehicles for political campaigning, fund-raising, or electioneering activities is prohibited.

F. Sick Leave

- 1. Employees will not operate a FHPD vehicle while on sick leave except sick leave taken specifically for routine medical or dental appointments or in conjunction with the death or illness of a member of the employee's immediate family.
- 2. Employees who go on sick leave while on-duty, may, if capable, drive a FHPD vehicle directly to their residence.

G. Issued Vehicle Equipment

- 1. All FHPD vehicles that are routinely used for patrol, whether marked or unmarked, will be equipped with emergency lights and a siren.
- 2. Unless otherwise indicated, the following equipment will be carried in FHPDM patrol vehicles in serviceable condition:
 - a. Spare tire;
 - b. Fire extinguisher;
 - c. Box of flares;
 - d. Registration card (unmarked and covert vehicles);
 - e. Flashing light (unmarked vehicles);
 - f. Speedometer record;
 - g. Crime scene barrier tape; and
 - h. Town automobile insurance information.

Chapter 16 Section 1

3. Should a piece of equipment become unserviceable, the officer to whom the vehicle is assigned will be responsible for obtaining a replacement as soon as possible.
4. Supervisors will be responsible for inspections of vehicles and equipment to ensure that officers are in compliance and that all equipment is in serviceable condition.
5. Monthly inspections will be conducted and documented.
6. All items a vehicle is required to have will be inspected unless they are not applicable based on job function.
7. Any rating that is less than satisfactory will be noted in the officer's personnel file.
8. Officers who receive a rating that is less than satisfactory will be re-evaluated during the next inspection; those who receive a rating that is less than satisfactory during multiple inspections may be subject to progressive discipline.

H. Non-Issue Vehicle Equipment

Only equipment approved and authorized by the Chief will be installed on FHPD vehicles.

I. Vehicle Maintenance

1. Officers will be responsible for the condition of their issued vehicle and maintaining it according to a pro-established schedule.
2. All repair or maintenance work to a vehicle will have prior approval by the Chief as per the Town of Forest Heights procurement and purchase policy.
3. All fluid levels are to be checked when a vehicle is filled with gasoline.
4. Officers who use a vehicle not assigned to them will fill the gas tank after using the vehicle. Officers sharing a vehicle may make arrangements between themselves regarding who will fill the gas tank.
5. After a tour of duty, officers will turn off the radio and secure the doors.
6. Marked and unmarked FHPD vehicles will not be parked in front of the Town Hall where signs indicate "No Parking".
7. Officers will be responsible for the appearance of their assigned vehicle.
8. Interior of the vehicles will be kept neat and vacuumed.
9. For vehicles not driven to an officer's residence at the end of a tour of duty, the gas tanks will be filled and all personal equipment removed from the vehicle.

J. Take Home Car Program

1. The issuance of a FHPD take-home vehicle and off-duty use privileges of a FHPD vehicle will be authorized by the FHPD Chief.
2. All FHPD vehicle policies apply to take home vehicles.
3. Officers with a take home car will keep the interior and exterior of the vehicle clean: they will maintain all equipment and accessories in a neat and orderly fashion, and ensure they operate properly.
4. All vehicle maintenance will be done in accordance with this policy.
5. Maintenance logs will be kept on all vehicles as recorded in the Records Management System.
6. When an employee will be out of the county or on administrative leave for an extended time period, the Chief may require that the officer leave the vehicle if no off street parking is available and make the vehicle available for use.
7. An officer on disability leave will not operate a FHPD vehicle, but will leave the vehicle in the Forest Heights' Town garage and make the vehicle available for use.
8. Officers whose powers have been suspended will immediately deliver the vehicle to the FHPD station.
9. Officers found to be violating the take-home car policy will be suspended from participating on the take home car program.